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ABSTRACT

This report provides information about the performance of 1999 graduating seniors nationwide in the United States who took the ACT Assessment as sophomores, juniors, or seniors. Caution is advised in applying these results because these students may not be representative of the total population of graduating seniors. Information is provided according to the level of high school coursework completed. In general, students who completed a core program tended to earn higher average scores (average composite score of 22.0) than students who did not complete core courses (average composite score of 19.5). This association holds true across racial and ethnic groups. Tables present trends in ACT composite scores for all students and across ethnic groups. (SLD)

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ACT ASSESSMENT RESULTS

National
2000

This report provides information about the performance of 2000 graduating seniors nationwide who took the ACT Assessment as sophomores, juniors or seniors. As you review and interpret the information please keep the following in mind:

- ACT-tested seniors may not be representative of the total population of graduating seniors.

- This report provides selected information about the nation's ACT-tested graduating seniors. For more details, please refer to the 2000 ACT National High School Profile Report.

Average ACT Scores

National
2000

To help policy-makers gain a better perspective on the association between coursework taken in high school and performance on the ACT Assessment, this report provides information about the graduating class according to level of high school coursework completed. Average scores are reported for 2000 graduating seniors who reported completing a core high school program (a **core or more** program is defined as a typical college preparatory program) and for those who reported not completing a high school core program. (Refer to following page).

The academic preparation a student receives in high school correlates with success in college. ACT research indicates that students who prepare academically by taking a core high school program consistently score higher on the ACT Assessment than those who do not. These same students also earn better grades in college. These facts underscore the value of a strong basic program of study in high school.

Levels of High School Coursework

Core or More

Core or more is defined as a typical college preparatory program including:

- **English (four years or more)**

  One year credit each for English 9, English 10, English 11, English 12

- **Mathematics (three years or more)**

  One year credit each for Algebra 1, Algebra II, Geometry
  One-half year credit each for Trigonometry, Calculus (not Pre-Calculus), other Math courses beyond Algebra II, Computer Math/Computer Science

- **Social Studies (three years or more)**

  One year credit each for American History, World History, American Government
  One-half year credit each for Economics, Geography, Psychology, other History (European, State, etc.)

- **Natural Sciences (three years or more)**

  One year credit each for General/Physical/Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics

Less Than Core

Less than core refers to a program of studies consisting of fewer courses than those included in core or more.

Average ACT test scores in English, Mathematics, Reading, Science Reasoning, and Composite for 2000 seniors who completed a core curriculum and those who did not are shown in Tables 1 and 2. In general, students who complete core coursework tend to earn higher average scores than students who do not complete core coursework. As Table 2 indicates, this association holds true across racial-ethnic groups. Table 3 shows that regardless of racial-ethnic background, the average Composite score for students who completed core coursework has been consistently higher over the past five years than the average Composite scores of those who did not.

Table 1
Average ACT Scores
By Level of High School Coursework

	Core or More					Less Than Core				
Reference Group	**E**	**M**	**R**	**SR**	**C**	**E**	**M**	**R**	**SR**	**C**
National	21.5	21.8	22.4	21.8	22.0	18.8	19.0	19.8	19.7	19.5

Table 2
Average ACT Scores
By Level of High School Coursework and Racial-Ethnic Group

	Core or More					Less Than Core				
National Reference Group	**E**	**M**	**R**	**SR**	**C**	**E**	**M**	**R**	**SR**	**C**
African-Amer./Black	17.4	17.6	17.8	17.9	17.8	15.0	15.8	16.0	16.5	16.0
Amer. Indian, Alaskan Native	19.7	20.0	20.9	20.6	20.4	16.6	17.1	18.2	18.4	17.7
Caucasian-Amer./White	22.3	22.4	23.1	22.5	22.7	19.6	19.5	20.6	20.4	20.2
Mexican-Amer./Chicano	18.6	19.6	19.7	19.6	19.5	16.3	17.4	17.6	18.0	17.5
Asian-Amer., Pacific Islander	21.3	23.9	22.0	22.0	22.4	18.6	21.3	19.6	20.1	20.0
P.R., Cuban, Other Hispanic	19.8	20.6	20.9	20.4	20.5	17.1	17.9	18.4	18.4	18.0

Table 3
Trends in Average ACT Composite Scores Across Five Years
By Level of High School Coursework and Racial-Ethnic Group

National Reference Group	Core or More		Less Than Core	
	N	Composite	N	Composite
All Graduates				
1996	542136	22.0	354733	19.2
1997	566141	22.1	361947	19.3
1998	606406	22.1	354306	19.3
1999	615545	22.0	367537	19.4
2000	645513	22.0	376645	19.5
African-American/Black				
1996	48321	17.9	38546	15.9
1997	50100	17.9	39696	16.0
1998	56544	17.9	41019	16.0
1999	58410	17.9	42061	16.0
2000	63837	17.8	42874	16.0
American Indian, Alaskan Native				
1996	5655	20.2	5419	17.7
1997	5685	20.4	5414	17.6
1998	5587	20.4	4903	17.7
1999	5332	20.4	4782	17.6
2000	5382	20.4	4821	17.7
Caucasian-American/White				
1996	398962	22.7	251375	19.9
1997	408851	22.8	250763	20.0
1998	444461	22.7	249092	20.0
1999	452100	22.7	260036	20.1
2000	470451	22.7	266811	20.2
Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino				
1996	11753	19.8	9438	17.4
1997	11875	19.9	9475	17.4
1998	19028	19.6	14541	17.2
1999	21260	19.6	15753	17.4
2000	23831	19.5	16018	17.5
Asian-American, Pacific Islander				
1996	19685	22.4	7676	19.7
1997	20201	22.5	7834	19.8
1998	22074	22.6	7886	20.0
1999	23017	22.3	8856	19.9
2000	24458	22.4	9314	20.0
Puerto Rican, Cuban, Other Hispanic				
1996	14838	20.0	10462	17.4
1997	15693	20.1	10615	17.4
1998	10732	20.7	5893	17.9
1999	8911	20.7	5002	17.9
2000	9350	20.5	5561	18.0

Table 4 presents the relationship between average ACT Composite scores and patterns of high school coursework across racial-ethnic groups **and** annual family income levels within each group.

Table 4
Average ACT Composite Scores
By Level of High School Coursework, Racial-Ethnic Group
And Annual Family Income

2000	Annual Family Income					
National	**Less than $18,000**		**$18,000-$50,000**		**$50,000 or more**	
Reference Group	**N**	**Composite**	**N**	**Composite**	**N**	**Composite**
All Graduates						
Total Group*	85096	18.3	388496	20.3	421428	22.3
Core	45786	19.2	231756	21.2	285342	23.1
Less than Core	38089	17.2	152616	18.9	131785	20.7
African-American/Black						
Total Group	24643	16.1	50021	17.0	17939	18.7
Core	13545	16.7	30071	17.7	11919	19.4
Less than Core	10863	15.3	19448	16.0	5817	17.5
American Indian, Alaskan Native						
Total Group	1726	17.3	4934	18.8	2569	20.7
Core	708	18.8	2472	20.1	1554	21.7
Less than Core	933	16.4	2293	17.6	957	19.2
Caucasian-American/White						
Total Group	36089	20.1	263626	21.1	347741	22.5
Core	18818	21.3	156934	22.1	235933	23.2
Less than Core	16922	18.7	104469	19.6	108719	20.9
Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino						
Total Group	7657	17.2	19361	18.5	8743	20.6
Core	4314	17.9	11416	19.3	5737	21.3
Less than Core	3295	16.2	7806	17.3	2932	19.3
Asian-American, Pacific Islander						
Total Group	4612	18.8	13431	20.8	11889	23.9
Core	3046	19.5	9342	21.5	9046	24.3
Less than Core	1473	17.3	3855	19.3	2654	22.4
Puerto Rican, Cuban, Other Hispanic						
Total Group	2247	17.7	6684	19.1	4313	21.5
Core	1197	18.7	3986	19.9	2950	22.2
Less than Core	950	16.4	2491	17.8	1240	19.9

* All "Total Group" counts and averages include students with unknown "Core" status.

Each year ACT collects freshman course grades from hundreds of colleges and universities. Research has shown ACT-tested graduates typically have at least a 50 percent chance of receiving at least a "B" in the courses listed in Table 5 if they obtain the identified ACT score value or higher. The columns in the right side of the table present the percentages of ACT-tested graduates that earned a score at or above the typical cutoff score. For example, of those students who had core or more coursework, 82% had an ACT English score at or above 17.

Table 5
Summary of Course Placement Cutoff Scores

Course Type	ACT Assessment Test Variable	Typical Cutoff Score	Percent At or Above The Typical Cutoff Score	
			Those with Core Coursework	Those With Less than Core Coursework
English				
Standard Composition	English	17	82	64
Advanced Composition	English	22	49	29
Literature	English	21	56	35
Mathematics				
Elementary Algebra	Mathematics	20	61	35
Intermediate Algebra	Mathematics	22	48	25
College Algebra	Mathematics	23	42	21
Calculus	Mathematics	27	20	8
Science				
Biology	Science Reasoning	24	34	18
Chemistry	Science Reasoning	25	25	13

Academic success at specific colleges/universities depends on many factors, including the selectivity of the institution and the institution's grading practices. Based on the information presented above, the percentage of ACT-tested students who would likely receive at least a "B" in the identified courses is higher for those who completed the recommended core coursework. Students who earn ACT scores below those listed may need additional academic preparation to be successful in these typical college entry level courses.

Table 6 compares percentages of students choosing selected academic majors in 1996, 1998, and 2000. Overall the interest in most majors has been consistent during this period.

Table 6
Percentages Choosing Selected Majors
By Graduation Year and Gender

National Reference Group	Men	Women	Total
Business			
1996	14	12	13
1998	14	11	12
2000	13	11	12
Computer/Information Sciences			
1996	4	1	3
1998	6	2	3
2000	8	2	4
Education			
1996	5	12	9
1998	5	13	10
2000	5	13	9
Engineering			
1996	17	3	9
1998	17	3	9
2000	16	3	8
Health Professions			
1996	13	27	21
1998	11	26	20
2000	10	25	18

Table 7 presents the average ACT Composite scores for various racial-ethnic groups from 1996 to 2000. Over this five-year period, the national average ACT Composite score for most racial-ethnic groups has remained relatively stable. The change in averages that occured between 1997 and 1998 for the Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino and the Puerto Rican/Cuban/Other Hispanic groups was due primarily to a change in racial-ethnic coding in 1998.

Table 7
Trends in Average ACT Composite Scores

National Reference Group	N	Composite
All Graduates		
1996	924663	20.9
1997	959301	21.0
1998	995039	21.0
1999	1019053	21.0
2000	1065138	21.0
African-American/Black		
1996	87630	17.0
1997	90617	17.1
1998	100537	17.1
1999	103932	17.1
2000	110617	17.0
American Indian, Alaskan Native		
1996	11580	18.8
1997	11509	19.0
1998	11132	19.0
1999	10830	18.9
2000	10976	19.0
Caucasian-American/White		
1996	654377	21.6
1997	663878	21.7
1998	707496	21.7
1999	732025	21.7
2000	762017	21.8

...Continued

Continued...

Table 7
Trends in Average ACT Composite Scores

National Reference Group	N	Composite
Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino		
1996	21345	18.7
1997	21511	18.8
1998	34617	18.5
1999	38257	18.6
2000	41414	18.6
Asian-American, Pacific Islander		
1996	27847	21.6
1997	28542	21.7
1998	30988	21.8
1999	33251	21.7
2000	35479	21.7
Puerto Rican, Cuban, Other Hispanic		
1996	25857	18.9
1997	26841	19.0
1998	17500	19.6
1999	15073	19.6
2000	16401	19.5

Annual national trends in ACT scores beginning with 1969-70 are available on request.